

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

- 5      1.    A method for authenticating a document,  
         comprising the steps of:  
             generating a document key by examining one or  
         more physical attributes of a physical media that  
         underlies the document;
- 10          imparting an original image onto the physical  
media such that the original image enables recovery  
of the document key.
2.    The method of claim 1, wherein the step of
- 15          imparting comprises the steps of:  
             generating a digital signature using the  
document key and a private key that corresponds to  
the document;
- encoding the digital signature into the original
- 20          image.
3.    The method of claim 1, wherein the step of  
imparting comprises the step of printing the document  
key on the physical media {as the original image}.
- 25          4.    The method of claim 1, further comprising the  
step of recording the document key along with a  
description of the document.
- 30          5.    The method of claim 1, further comprising the  
step of verifying the document by performing the  
steps of:

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    obtaining a recovered document key from the
original image;

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6. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of  
generating a document key comprises the step of  
10 examining paper fiber patterns in the physical media.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of imparting comprises the steps of:

encoding the digital signature into the original image.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of  
generating a document key comprises the step of  
30 examining density differences of the physical media.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of generating a document key comprises the step of

examining a unique pattern imparted in the physical media.

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    imager that generates a set of pixel data values
in response to a document;

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10 obtained from the document.